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ABSTRACT

This study investigates beginning teacher induction programs; what is known about experienced teachers acting as mentors; what mentors do and how they think about their work; and what novices learn from their interactions with them. This case study describes how one support teacher, Pete Frazer, a 30-year veteran, defines and enacts his role with beginning teachers. Based on 10 hours of interview data and 10 hours of observational data, specific principles and strategies that shape Frazer's practice and methods he utilized to learn this kind of work are considered. He defines the essence of mentoring in terms of adopting a stance of co-thinker rather than expert, and achieving a balance between the desire to share personal knowledge of good teaching with the need to help novices construct their own versions. Findings suggest that in his role as mentor, Frazer contributed to the learning of beginning teachers, and also learned himself; this learning helped him become a better support teacher and a better classroom teacher; the learning occurred through collaboration and experimentation within a professional learning community. Mentoring presumes the value of discourse about teaching and learning among teachers. (LL)

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Sharon Feiman-Nemser

NCRTE

National
Center for Research
on Teacher Education

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HELPING NOVICES LEARN TO TEACH: LESSONS FROM AN EXPERIENCED SUPPORT TEACHER

Sharon Feiman-Nemser

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Abstract

There is growing interest in the problem of teacher induction and widespread support for the idea of assigning experienced teachers to work with beginning teaches. Still, we know relatively little about what thoughtful mentor teachers do, how they think about their work, and what novices learn from their interactions with them. This paper describes how one exemplary support teacher defines and enacts his role with beginning teachers. Based on 10 hours of interview data and 10 hours of observational data, the paper illustrates specific principles and strategies that shape Pete Frazer's practice and considers how he learned to do this kind of work. As a close study of extraordinary practice, the paper offers a vision of what beginning teacher support could be like and some ideas about the conditions needed to sustain it.

HELPING NOVICES LEARN TO TEACH: LESSONS FROM AN EXPERIENCED SUPPORT TEACHER[1]

Sharon Feiman-Nemser[2]

> I want to be a co-thinker with them, so that I can help them see new perspectives, new ways to solve the problems they have.

In this eloquent statement, Pete Frazer,[3] a 30-year veteran teacher, sums up the essence of his work with beginning teachers. Released for two years from classroom teaching, Frazer works full time as a support teacher in an induction/internship program jointly sponsored by a university and a local school district. Assigned to help 14 beginning elementary teachers, he spends most of his time visiting their classrooms and talking to them about their teaching.

I focus this paper on Pete Frazer because I believe that we can learn a lot from him about the role that experienced teachers could play in the induction of beginning teachers and about the kinds of enabling conditions that make this possible. Pete Frazer is not an ordinary teacher and the induction program he works in is not a typical program. Still, much can be gained from a close study of extraordinary practice because it provides a vision of the possible rather than a view of the probable (Shulman, 1983).

A close study of an exemplary support teacher is especially timely. Not only is there growing interest in the problem of teacher induction, but the idea of assigning experienced teachers to work with beginning teachers has received widespread support. At the same time we have limited models of what that work should be like. This may help explain why the most popular labels in the United States—coach and mentor—have been borrowed by education from the fields of business and athletics.

Providing on-site support and assistance is especially critical during the beginning years of teaching. New teachers really have two jobs to do—they have to do the job they were hired for and they have to learn to do that job (Wildman et al., 1989). No matter what kind of preparation a teacher receives, some aspects of learning to teach can only be

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[1]This paper was presented in September 1991 at the meeting of the International Study Association on Teacher Thinking in Surrey, England.

[2]Sharon Feiman-Nemser, professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, is a senior researcher with the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.

[3]All names of teachers and students used in this paper are pseudonyms.

learned on the job. No college course can teach a new teacher how to blend knowledge of particular students and knowledge of particular content in decisions about what to do in specific situations.

Experienced teachers can help novices survive their first year of teaching. They can also influence what is learned from the experience. Little (1990) makes an important distinction between emotional support that helps novices feel comfortable and professional support that fosters a principled understanding of teaching. From this perspective, the promise of mentoring lies not only in helping beginning teachers learn how to teach, but also in helping them learn how to reason about and learn from their teaching.

Besides creating new incentives and career opportunities for experienced teachers, assigning mentors to help novices develop their practice represents a break with past assumptions, at least in the United States, about where knowledge for teaching comes from and how it can be learned. Implicit in the title "mentor" is "the presumption of wisdom . . . accumulated knowledge that can serve as the basis of sensitive observation, astute commentary, sound advice" (Little, 1990, p. 316). Yet we know little about what thoughtful mentors teach novices and how they make their knowledge available.

Most claims about the importance of mentors are based on global assessments of their usefulness (Huffman & Leak, 1986) or official records of their activities (Odell, 1986). To understand better the potential of mentoring as a vehicle for teacher development we need to know what exemplary mentors do, how they think about their work, and what novices learn from interactions with them. This paper makes a modest contribution toward that end by describing how one thoughtful support teacher defines and enacts his role and how he learned to do so.

The Subject, the Data, and the Analysis

Considered a "legend" in his district, Pete Frazer has been teaching elementary school for over 30 years. In 1975, he earned a doctorate from the University of New Mexico where he worked with Marie Hughes, a prominent early childhood educator. A frequent instructor at the University and presenter at inservice workshops, Pete Frazer is a strong advocate of anecdotal records as a way for teachers to study children and keep track of their thinking and learning. When Frazer applied for the job of support teacher, the program director wondered whether others would be intimidated by his reputation: "It was obvious that he could work with children. It was obvious that he could work with adults. And it was obvious that he was open to learning. But was he so proficient that he would be threatening?" So she asked him, and his response allayed her concerns. "He is so modest

and so willing to look at what other people can teach him. It is very obvious when you speak to him."

This paper is based on 10 hours of interview data and an equal amount of observational data gathered in five visits to the site spread over a period of two years.[4] Besides regular conversations with Frazer about the program, his participation in it, and the progress of his interns, we conducted two formal interviews designed to uncover Frazer's reasons for becoming a support teacher, his views of his role, and how he learned it, his thoughts about the impact of the work on his teaching. In addition, we followed Frazer around on two separate occasions, observing his interactions with interns and other beginning teachers both in and out of the classroom. We took notes about the teaching we observed together, taped Frazer's conversations with clients, and interviewed him about what we had seen and heard. By watching Frazer in action and then talking to him about his practice, we sought a better understanding of what it means to be a support teacher in this context.[5]

In analyzing the observational data and accompanying interviews, I was struck by the abundance of Frazer's strategic knowledge and by the eloquence and precision with which he talked about his actions. Scattered throughout the interview transcripts were instances where Frazer labeled a specific principle or strategy, or offered a clear rationale for a particular action. As I thought about these examples in conjunction with the other interviews, I began to sense powerful connections between the way Frazer defined his role and the way he carried it out. Here was a fresh set of terms for describing particular moves along with a conception of role and purpose to give them unity.

Much of the language of beginning teacher support comes from the literature on clinical supervision and coaching which gives the misleading impression that a technology for mentors exists. Pete Frazer's formulations offer a striking contrast to the procedural, morally neutral vocabulary of scripting, pattern analysis, conferencing, feedback and supervision cycles derived from these sources.

In this wisdom of practice study, I codify some of Frazer's knowledge, weaving together thoughts about teaching and learning to teach with ideas about the role of the

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[4]Michelle Parker was a research assistant on the project. She did most of the interviewing and due to her skill, the data are unusually rich.

[5]These data were collected as part of a larger study of teacher education and learning to teach carried out by the National Center for Research on Teacher Education (NCRTE) at Michigan State University. The Center's research combined case studies of eleven different teacher education programs with longitudinal studies of teachers' learning as they participated in those programs and moved into teaching. The Graduate Intern/Teacher Induction Program in which Frazer worked was one of the research sites. For more information about the Center's research, see NCRTE, 1988.

support teacher. I also show how Frazer enacts his role by giving examples of specific moves we saw him make and/or heard him talk about. In each case, I rely on Frazer's own language to help convey the intent behind the move. Finally, I consider the question of how Frazer learned this version of beginning teacher support.

Defining the Role

Pete Frazer has very clear ideas about what it means to be a support teacher and how that differs from being a supervisor or a mentor teacher. His role definition embraces a central tension between personal expression and professional accountability, between the unique qualities of an individual teaching style and the shared understandings about what constitutes good practice. This tension also runs through Frazer's views of teaching and learning to teach.

In talking about what it means to be a support teacher, Frazer identifies two elements: (1) helping novices find ways to express who they are in their work and (2) helping novices develop a practice that is responsive to the community and reflects what we know about children and learning. "Being a support teacher," he says, "means helping people grow and become good teachers. It's a combination of basing teaching techniques on what we know about children and learning, and what we are like as people, our personalities, interests, inclinations."

This role definition echoes Frazer's ideas about good teaching which include concern for the unique and the common, the idiosyncratic and the generalizable. "Part of what I would call good teaching," he says, "is just idiosyncratic to me and to my readings and my studies and my learning. Part of what I would call good teaching is more generalizable . . . and would be recognized by all."

Given this double-vision, Frazer tries to avoid two dangers in working with novices: "imposing his own style" and "sounding too laissez-faire." Committed to helping novices find their own style rather than copy his, he does not want to give the impression that anything goes. After all, he points out,

> We do know some things about teaching and learning. We know some things about people and schools and communities. Hopefully the things that I know about, I can help them use, and not just be there and say, "Gosh, whatever you're becoming is wonderful."

Frazer's ideas about the roles of supervisor and mentor provide further insights into his understanding of what it means to be a support teacher. "A supervisor," Frazer said, "is

someone who makes sure the job gets done in the way it's supposed to get done. It carries overtones of evaluation." Unlike support teachers, supervisors have formal responsibility for evaluating beginning teachers. Whereas supervisors monitor performance, support teachers facilitate a process of personal/professional development.

The term "mentor" raises a different issue for Frazer because it suggests the idea of "expertise to be imitated." "A mentor shows you how to do it or tells you what to do." While Pete Frazer does demonstration teaching and freely shares ideas from his own teaching practice, he sees himself less as a provider of solutions and more as a partner in problem solving.

Pete Frazer captures the essence of what being a support teacher is all about with the phrase "co-thinker." No summary of what he means by this could do justice to his eloquent elaboration:

> I want to be a co-thinker with them so that I can help them to see maybe new perspectives, new ways to solve the problems they have. . . . And always, as they're doing the thinking, I bring to that as a listener my whole world view, my whole perspective about the nature of human beings and education. So when I make suggestions, of course they have some relationship to what I think is good schooling . . . but I try to keep an awareness that Frank or Ellen or Diane—each one of them is in the process of developing their own set of things. So I certainly don't want to impose my whole view on them. . . . *I just want to stand beside them and work and let them take from me what fits into the solution of the problem they're working on now.* (italics added)

By adopting the stance of a co-thinker rather than an expert, Frazer tries to balance his desire to share what he knows about good teaching with his concern to help novices construct their own version.

Enacting the Role

The strategies Frazer uses to enact his role are an extension of these ideas. Some strategies reflect his respect for novices as individuals in the process of developing. Others express his commitment to build professional practice on self-study and relevant knowledge. Most striking is the strong parallel between the way Pete Frazer treats beginning teachers and the way he hopes they will treat their students.

Finding Openings

A big issue in working with beginning teachers is deciding what to talk about. The literature on clinical supervision recommends that the supervisor and teacher decide on a common focus during the preobservation conference. The literature on advising suggests working from the teacher's self-defined concerns. Both give the impression that this is a relatively straightforward process.

Frazer sees the process in more dynamic terms. His approach involves finding "openings," fruitful topics that are salient to the novice and lead to a consideration of basic issues that all teachers need to think about. The word "productive" suggests the kind of topic he is looking for—not just anything the novice brings up but something that will open up a "productive line of thinking."

This idea of "openings" came out in an interview we had with Frazer following a visit to Ellen's classroom. When the researcher asked Frazer how the conference went compared with what he had expected, Pete replied:

> Well, the only thing I had on my potential agenda going in was to do some follow up on the Chinese New Year because the last time I had talked to her, she was real enthused about that. . . . As it turned out, the *opening* came in the direction of Ruben. And the key thing, I decided, was seeing if there was going to be *something productive* when I asked about the student of the week and how well he does on reading the school newsletter. That just *opened the door* to all this talk about possible retention next year. It was so much *rich content* there that it took all but five minutes of our half hour. (italics added)

Ellen had been worrying about whether Ruben would be ready to go on to second grade by the end of the year. The school district requires teachers to notify parents early in the year about the possibility of retention so that they will not be surprised later on by such a recommendation. When Frazer noticed that Ruben was "student of the week" and asked how he was doing, Ellen poured out her concerns about what to do. This led to an extended discussion about Ruben's accomplishments to date, his likely progress by June, the pros and cons of holding him back or sending him on to second grade, and the problems caused by rigid grade-level expectations. Frazer suggested that Ellen find out more about the philosophies of the second grade teachers concerning reading so that she would be in a position to recommend an appropriate placement. Ellen had never considered that teachers could take that initiative and exercise that kind of influence. By exploring the case of Ruben, Frazer not only responded to an immediate concern, he also raised broader issues regarding assessment, individual differences, and teachers' responsibilities.

Pinpointing Problems

A related strategy involves "pinpointing problems." In *How We Think*, Dewey (1933) reminds us that problems are not ready-made; they must be constructed out of a problematic situation. More recently, Donald Schon (1983) elaborates on the nature of problem framing in the context of professional work.

> When we set the problem, we select what we will treat as the "things" of the situation, we set the boundaries of our attention to it, and we impose on it a coherence which allows us to say what is wrong and in what directions the situation needs to be changed. (p. 40)

The notion of problems as constructed rather than given seems absent from the literature on beginning teacher concerns. A recent review (Veenman, 1989) identifies discipline and management as the most pressing problems of beginning teachers, a diagnosis widely accepted in the field. Yet problems classified as management or discipline problems often have more to do with curriculum and instruction. A little probing reveals that such problems frequently arise because the teacher is unclear about her purposes or has chosen an inappropriate task or has not given students adequate directions.

Frazer recognizes that problems must be identified or, as he puts it, "pinpointed." When Diane tells him that she isn't feeling very good about reading, he suggests that they talk about this next time. Later he explains his rationale to the researcher:

> I want to help her clarify, what does she mean by, "Reading isn't going well?" I mean, let's sort out the elements because it's such a big statement—"Reading isn't going well." I'd like her to be able to get at this . . . to *pinpoint the problem* . . . to come up with some specifics about what about it isn't as good as it could be. . . . I'd like to think with her, to help her *pinpoint* more exactly what she means about "reading is not going well." And that means looking for strengths as well as things she wants to change.

Probing Novices' Thinking

In order to be a "co-thinker" with beginning teachers, Pete Frazer has to know what his clients are thinking about an issue. Sometimes he issues an "invitation" by asking open-ended questions that encourage novices to talk about what's on their minds. Often he asks probing questions in order to learn what novices mean and help them clarify their ideas. "I want to get at what they're thinking about an issue. . . . I don't want to just assume that

I know from a few words. . . . So I keep coming back with—what do you think? What's going on? I guess that's a *style* or *technique* I use to make sure I'm getting enough input from them."

When Ellen commented that the children could read the school newspaper more quickly, Frazer asked: "Why do you think the work with the newsletter is going faster?" Later he offered the following rationale for his question:

> I was trying to get at what her picture is about why progress is occurring in reading. . . . What are her thoughts about why it is getting better? We don't just need to say, "They're better at this, now that's nice." A more productive line of thinking is, "Why did it get better? What has led to that?"

A similar rationale undergirds Pete Frazer's approach to Diane, the intern who didn't think that reading was going very well. Pete said he hopes she will clarify her reasons for using the basal as they talk it through:

> I'm not sure how much she's thought of all the reasons and I'm curious to know what her sequence is, why is she doing this, where do you go next, how do you help kids along the road to improvement? I'll think with her on that and we'll both learn from it.

Noticing Signs of Growth

As we observed Pete Frazer working with different beginning teachers, we noticed that he regularly complimented them on specific aspects of their teaching. He complimented Ellen on how nicely the children lined up and walked themselves down the hall, saying, "That's a testimony to the trust and respect that you give to them." He complimented Fran on the way she fostered thinking: "I don't think I've ever been in a class where so much thinking is going on. . . . You continually turn it back to them with an attitude that says, 'Think about it because you'll be probably be able to figure it out.'" He complimented Diane on the way she handled the administrative intern: "You really showed you were a strong teacher."

When we questioned Frazer about this practice, he offered a general rationale based on the beginning teacher's psychological or emotional needs:

> In the first year, you have doubts, you need reassurance, you're so overwhelmed by all the things you think you're not doing. "I'm not teaching enough science. I'm not teaching social studies in the right way." You need

> to know all the ways that you're effectively working. I don't think you can ever get too much of that.

In reassuring his clients, Frazer strives to offer specific feedback about individual accomplishments rather than general praise for doing a good job. Each instance of praise that we observed reflected an assessment of the teacher's unique strengths and needs. Later Frazer explained that he tries to give compliments "that are really true and aren't just phony pats on the back." For example, in response to our query about Ellen, he said:

> I want her to see, sometimes she says things to me that make me wonder if she knows how good she is. I think she needs to hear in many ways what an excellent job she is doing. I do that a lot with her because she says things like, "I don't know if I've been doing this right. What do you think?" I don't think it's fishing for compliments. I think she genuinely needs to hear a lot of times and in a lot of ways what a great job she's doing in that room.

When he complimented Fran on how she fosters thinking, he wanted her to see how her teaching reflects her own intellectual style. "You're such a thinker. . . . The children in your room, their thinking is starting to parallel yours in so many wonderful ways."

Frazer calls this "noticing signs of growth" and it fits with his view of learning to teach as a process of development. When he notices Fran dealing with a student in a more direct way, for example, Frazer calls that to her attention:

> I can see you're now more directive. Jose was not doing what he was supposed to and you said, "I'm going to need to interrupt you. You really have a responsibility over there that isn't finished. Go get that done and then come back." *That was more direct and less beating around the bush than before.* (italics added)

And he reminds Diane that, earlier in the year, she would not have been able to explain her position on reading to the administrative intern and principal. This kind of concrete and specific feedback helps novices get a clearer picture of their evolving style and what they need to learn.

Focusing on the Kids

Focusing on the student's behavior rather than on the teacher's behavior provides a "neutral ground" and avoids "putting pressure on the teacher." The trick is to "ask the

question in a way that doesn't make the teacher think he's neglected Eric or that he doesn't know what he's doing."

Focusing on kids may be an indirect way of getting beginning teachers to examine some problem in their teaching by looking at the consequences for students. It is also a general principle that shapes much of what Frazer does. In keeping with his views of learning and his beliefs about good teaching, Frazer tries to focus his clients' attention on their pupils' thinking and sense making. He regards such data as an invaluable source of feedback on teaching, a way to keep track of children's learning, and a source of ideas for curriculum development.

When Frazer visits classrooms, he often gets involved with the students, taking on the role of co-teacher. One reason for doing this is to gather information about the pupils' learning that he can share with the teacher. Frazer often visited Bonnie's room when the children were writing. So he would pull up a chair, sit down and start helping them with their editing. If he noticed something special about a pupil's writing, he might call it to Bonnie's attention on the spot by going over and telling her "Jenny is doing this and this with her writing and that seems to be such an improvement." Alternatively he might write a note about something a child did or said and give it to the teacher. The day Ellen introduced a reading activity using sentence strips, Frazer overheard one of her students say that the strips of paper reminded him of Chinese fortune cookies. Frazer made a note about that and handed it to the teacher. Afterwards he explained his purpose to the researcher:

> I hope it helps her see. One of the ways you get feedback about your own work is from little indices like that during the day. For me, that kind of anecdotal information is so much more valuable for studying your own work than the test scores of children on standardized tests.

Reinforcing an Understanding of Theory

Besides focusing novices' attention on specific instances of children's sense making, Frazer tries to connect these examples to research and theory. After listening to Ellen talk about her pupils' reading, Frazer brings up Frank Smith's research and his ideas about "how kids bring their own meaning to a page." Later he explains his rationale to the researcher:

> She knows that theory but I think we can never know it enough. . . . It needs to be continually brought up because the new paradigms for teaching reading and writing and language are so completely different than the old ones that I think it's a career-long process to keep looking at that.

By reinforcing theoretical ideas in context, Frazer tries to help novices develop broad perspectives for looking at and thinking about their work. In particular, he wants them to acquire a deep understanding of how children learn, enriched by theoretical knowledge as well as concrete experience. This understanding is central to Frazer's view of good teaching.

Giving "Living Examples of One Person's Ways of Teaching"

Teacher educators have long debated the merits of apprenticeship-type learning opportunities. Ever since Dewey (1904/1965) distinguished the "laboratory" view of practical work with its emphasis on intellectual methods from the "apprenticeship" view with its focus on performance, the apprenticeship has gotten bad press in teacher education circles. Critics argue that it encourages imitation rather than understanding.

While the apprenticeship model does encourage novices to learn the practices of the master, it does not necessarily preclude a consideration of underlying principles or the development of conceptual understanding (Ball, 1987; Schon, 1987). Collins, Brown, and Newman (1989) have coined the term "cognitive apprenticeship" to describe experiential learning situations in which teachers think aloud so that learners can not only observe their actions but also "see" how their teachers think about particular tasks or problems.

This idea of a cognitive apprenticeship fits the intent behind Frazer's demonstration teaching. He calls this "giving living examples of one person's ways of teaching" and he hopes that novices will not only get particular teaching ideas but also begin to sort out general characteristics of good teaching. This intellectual task involves separating the qualities that are unique to Frazer's personality and style from more general features of good practice.

When Diane expressed concern about how to motivate her low reading group and what to do with them for a whole hour, Frazer volunteered to teach a reading lesson. He introduced and read a story from the basal about a mouse, then he read aloud from *Stuart Little* by E. B. White, a classic children's book about a distinguished mouse born into a human family. During the lesson, he stopped to explain to Diane what he was doing and why. Here is how he described the lesson to the researcher:

> I got myself all jazzed up about mice and I said, "The first thing you need to do is get them so they want to know more about mice." So we did this activity to get them interested in mice and mice words. . . . I would stop as I was teaching and say, "This is why I'm doing this."

Frazer hoped that Diane would see "some specific methods for getting across a reading lesson." In particular, he wanted to show her how to integrate reading aloud good children's literature with lessons from the basal reader. At the same time, he hoped that she could set aside the parts that are uniquely Frazer such as the way he talks like Donald Duck and pull out some general features of good teaching—"He responded positively to children. He really listened to children. He extended what they said." Because we do not have data about how Diane made sense of this demonstration, we cannot tell whether she was able to do this.

Modeling Wondering About Teaching

While we usually associate modeling with actions, Frazer also models ways of thinking about teaching. He calls this "modeling wondering about teaching" and he sees it as central to the improvement of teaching. "It seems that wondering about our work and wondering about kids is a major element in being able to improve our teaching. . . . Part of the excitement of teaching and also the effectiveness depends on a sense of wondering."

The idea of modeling wondering about teaching came up in our interview with Frazer about his meeting with Frank that dealt with the problem of teaching multiplication to third graders. To illustrate this strategy, I offer this extended example because it also shows how many of the principles and strategies discussed above come together in Pete Frazer's practice. Specifically in this episode we see Frazer probing Frank's thinking, focusing on kids' sense making, bringing in research, giving a living example of his teaching, and modeling wondering about teaching.

An extended example. Frank had asked Frazer to work with a small group of third graders who were having trouble with multiplication. Frank had been doing some "skill and drill" work with them, but he wasn't sure they were getting it. On the way to school, Frazer described his purpose to the researcher:

> I don't have a very specific goal except that both of us will think more about what goes on with kids. . . . I think we'll both be trying to clarify what are we trying to get kids to understand when they multiply and what can eight-year-olds [understand], what kind of sense of it can they make and what kind of manipulatives can we use to help make sense of that.

Fr... met Frank in his classroom at 8:00, 30 minutes before the children showed up. He bro... a book for Frank, *How Children Learn Mathematics* by Richard Coplin and a bag of sma... games pieces and rubber bands to use in helping students get the idea of

separating things into sets. In his usual fashion, Frazer let Frank take the lead, listening patiently while Frank described his confusion regarding the numbers in a multiplication problem—"Which is the number of sets and which is the number of items in a set?"

After a while, Frazer gently shifted the conversation from Frank's confusion to their plans for the morning. Would Frank like to see what he was planning to do with the kids? he asked. Frank listened eagerly as Frazer described how he would use the cubes and rubber bands to help students represent the times tables. He also accepted the extra materials Frazer had brought, putting aside the worksheet he had prepared for them. When the children arrived, Frazer worked with one small group while Frank worked with another. Then Frazer left for another appointment.

In the interview following the visit, Frazer (PF) explained to the researcher (R) that he wanted to show Frank (F) the strategy of using game pieces and rubber bands, even though he did not necessarily intend for him to "do it that way." He also planned to use data gathered from working with the children to talk with Frank about how children make sense of mathematics. In the course of elaborating on this idea, he introduced the idea of modeling how he wonders about teaching:

R: What type of feedback will you give Frank?

PF: It depends on what he brings up. One of the things we can always keep thinking about . . . in a class of 24 kids . . . how much variety there is in their understanding of mathematics and how very individual it is. . . . I would like to highlight that with examples from his group and my group. . . . I want to *model* how important I think it is to . . . maintain a balance between the information you are dealing with and the individual realities of the kids.

R: When you say *model*, what do you mean?

F: Thinking about it, I guess. Say, for example, look at Louis, I wonder if he was thinking this and this, or I wonder what he was thinking but I don't have a theory. *It seems important to give him examples of how I wonder about the work, as a teacher, how questions come up, how I say, "I wonder what is going on here. It could be this, it could be this. What are the factors contributing to this?" So that's what I mean by modeling.* (italics added)

Frazer understands that learning to teach involves more than learning to act like a teacher. It also entails learning to think like a teacher. Frazer takes seriously his responsibility to foster an inquiring stance and to induct novices into the intellectual work of teaching.

Enabling Conditions

How did Pete Frazer learn to work with beginning teachers in this way? Where did he develop his ideas about the support teacher's role? Without diminishing the contribution of Pete Frazer's personal resources, it is important to point out that he worked in a program that provides support teachers with the same kind of backing and guidance that it offers novice teachers. In short, Pete Frazer learned the role of support teacher and developed his practice in the context of a professional learning community.

Frazer was one of eight support teachers working for two years in the Graduate Intern/Teacher Induction Program, a joint venture of the University of New Mexico and the Albuquerque Public Schools. Through an ingenious financial arrangement that involves no additional cost to the district, the program releases 15 experienced teachers from classroom duties to work full time with preservice and beginning teachers for two years. It does this by placing 28 interns in classrooms where they carry out all the responsibilities of a first year teacher while earning half a beginning teacher's salary. Interns are also working on a master's degree at the university. The money saved allows the district to continue paying the experienced teachers their full salary.[6]

Support teachers begin learning about their role in a weeklong orientation before the start of the school year and continue studying their work in a weekly, three-hour staff seminar throughout the year.[7] Conducted by the program director, a national expert on teacher induction, the staff seminar provides a regular opportunity for ongoing conversation about how to help new teachers.[8] Presenting individual cases is a regular activity in the staff seminar. Support teachers raise specific questions or describe particular situations which

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[6]Seven of the teachers work as clinical supervisors in the preservice program where they co-teach methods courses with university faculty and plan and supervise related field experiences. Eight of the teachers serve as clinical support teachers in the Graduate Intern/Teacher Induction Program where they work with graduate interns and other beginning teachers in the district.

[7]Support teachers receive three graduate credits for participating in the staff seminar. They also receive a tuition voucher so that they can take another course they choose each semester. During our study, support teachers used their vouchers to study writing, clinical supervision, aerobics, administration, Spanish.

[8]As part of our study of the program, we observed the orientation and sat in on six staff seminars over a two-year period. We also interviewed the program director about her goals and interviewed each support teacher about the contribution of the seminar to their work.

they need help addressing. Besides talking about individual clients and how to help them, the support teachers read and discuss various articles about teaching and learning to teach selected by the program director. Combining discussions of specific problems with more theoretical discussions and readings helps support teachers clarify their beliefs, develop a shared language, and construct an understanding of what it means to support and assist beginning teachers.

From his colleagues Pete Frazer learned a lot about how to be a support teacher and about the value of collaboration. Like most teachers, he had had few opportunities to learn with and from colleagues. "It means a lot to me," he explained. "As a teacher, I've gotten along well with my colleagues . . . but mostly I've done my own work and didn't work on a team." In the interviews, Frazer describes what he found most valuable about the staff seminar:

> The biggest part has been the review of individual cases, individual things that are actually going on with one of my team members. I've got this and this going on with a teacher and principal at my school. Then we all think together with that person. OK, what's going on, in what ways can we put our heads together to help you think of ways you can work with them. That has been the most continuously helpful thing for me.

Learning to be more direct. One thing Frazer learned from his colleagues and from on-the-job experience was how to be more direct about getting into people's classrooms. Compared with the other support teachers, Frazer said he was "the most cautious," at least during his first year in this new role. By listening to colleagues talk about "ways to work their way into thinking with their clients about problems, ways to set mini-agendas or ways to get into conversations that have depth and potential" and by experimenting with different strategies, Frazer gradually learned to be more direct.

When we returned the second year of the study to observe Frazer and talk to him about his work, he reflected on how he had grown as a support teacher: "Last year I waited more for the clients to bring things up. This year I bring them up more myself. . . . I'm better at my job . . . and it feels good." Then he described in great detail how he had been

trying to work his way into the classroom of a very resistant beginning teacher.[9] He started out indirectly, but quickly surmised that that would not work. So he brought in a 10-sided die and showed the teacher some quick activities to do, hoping "that would make her know that I have practical ideas." But she said, "Thank you very much." And no invitation followed. Finally he said directly,

> You know, part of my job is to come in the room and help people. I work in the rooms of all my clients and I would like to come in and work in you room, but I need to know when and if you would like me.

She said she would let him know. "I've done everything I can short of walking in there and sitting down. She doesn't seem to have anything to hide." He has gone in at lunch time to do mini-workshops on math and science for this beginner and the teacher next door. "I've given every hint I can in every direct way and no way, she's not going to let me in her room." While this seemed to be an extreme case, it was clear that Frazer would not have taken such actions the previous year.

Learning new approaches to writing. Not only did Frazer develop his practice as a support teacher, he also broadened his ideas about teaching children, particularly in the area of writing. Attending a district-sponsored workshop on the writing process with his interns and watching several of them start a writers' workshop in their classroom led Frazer to "rethink" his approach to the teaching of writing. In the past Frazer had his students write stories about artificial topics (e.g., "A Martian landed in your community. What did the community do about it?"). During his tenure as a support teacher, he came to see the significance of grounding students' writing in their own life experiences. "You're teaching them to look at the world and write about things that they've experienced, that they've been through, and turning those into essays or stories." The intense involvement of the students and the quality of their writing persuaded Frazer that he should consider incorporating writers' workshop into his own teaching.

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[9]Support teachers work with graduate interns who are master's candidates at the university and with other beginning teachers in the district. The graduate interns are their first priority. Support teachers participate fully in the graduate intern program and there is a high premium placed on their relationship with interns. For other beginning teachers not enrolled in the graduate intern program, having a support teacher is an added resource that the district offers. Whether or not they avail themselves of this resource depends on the skill of the support teacher in negotiating entry and the openness of the beginning teachers to this kind of assistance. In most cases, the reputation of the program and the expertise of the support teachers makes this work. In a few cases, such as the one described here, the beginning teacher resists the overtures of the support teacher.

> I'm so amazed how kids can stay involved. More and more, I'm thinking *when I go back to a classroom, I'll try to make the Writers' Workshop the heart of our writing.* It's been a slow change for me. I didn't know if it could work with kids and it felt like all these steps and if they're spending so long on one piece of writing and thinking, "How will they do it?" And I see them doing it. It's very developmentally sound. Each child will be at their own level of writing and the process will help them write more and take them farther.

I draw several lessons from these examples of Pete Frazer's learning. First, in his role as support teacher, Frazer not only contributed to the learning of beginning teachers, he also learned himself. Second, this learning helped him become a better support teacher and a better classroom teacher. Third, this learning occurred through collaboration and experimentation within a professional learning community.

The current trend toward creating mentoring roles for experienced teachers represents a break with past assumptions about where knowledge for teaching comes from. It also represents a break with the prevailing structure of schools and the culture of teaching. Mentoring presumes the value of discourse about teaching and learning among teachers and presses toward decreased isolation and privacy of teaching practice. For this promise to be realized we must pay careful attention to the kinds of people who become mentors and to the opportunities they have to learn about and develop their role as mentors.[10]

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[10]This paper about Pete Frazer will be followed by a second paper in which I explore how other support teachers enact their role. I want to show how the variation we observed in how support teachers work with beginning teachers exists within a shared view of good teaching and a shared conception of the support teacher's role.

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